

FRANCO-GERMAN RELATIONS 1871-1914

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desirable possession for Germany were greeted with derisive laughter in the Reichstag. Kiderlen's threats of war and the outbursts in the Pan-German press added to the store of ill-will that had been accumulating in France for forty years. In Germany, on the other hand, the wrath of the people was directed far more against Great Britain for what was considered her needless intervention than against France for the stubborn defence of her acknowledged interests.

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The Agadir crisis was followed in England by a slight Anglo-German rapprochement, inaugurated by Haldane's mission to Berlin, and in France by the accession to power of Ppincar6 with a strong team. The personality of the new Premier made a deep impression on Iswolsky, the Russian Ambassador, whose despatches vividly portray the revival of self-confidence in governing circles in France. During the twelve months of his premiership the bonds between the members of the Triple 'Entente were further tightened in view of the European war which few experienced statesmen expected to avoid. A Franco-Russian Naval Convention was signed, the French fleet was transferred to the Mediterranean in friendly agreement with England, and the Grey-Cambon letters defined the relations between London and Paris. When an agent of the German Foreign Office visited Paris in March, 1912, with the offer of "wide autonomy in Alsace-Lorraine" in his pocket, he found no response in the official world. "The German Government," commented Poincare, "seems to pursue with unwearying persistence a rapprochement which only a complete repudiation of the past would render possible. To listen to such propositions would be to quarrel with England and

Russia and to lose the benefit of the policy which France has pursued for years. We should only obtain illusory satisfactions for Alsace, and we should find ourselves next day isolated."

Bethmann deckres in his Memoirs that after the coming of Poincaré to power the French Ambassador in Berlin was a different man. He remained as courteous as ever, but the improvement of relations was no longer the theme of his conversation. The polite telegrams to the Kaiser which Poincard quotes as evidence of the correctness of his attitude did not disguise the fact that the two nations had at no time since 1871 been further apart; and France no longer stood alone.